

# Muslims in Canada

Religious community

- According to Canada's 2001 census, there were 579,740 Muslims in Canada, just under 2% of the population

- In 2006, the **Muslim population** was estimated to be 0.8 million or about 2.6%. In 2010, the Pew Research Center estimates there were about 940,000 Muslims in Canada.[\[1\]](#) About **65% were Sunni**, while **15% were Shia**.[\[2\]](#) Some Muslims are non-practicing.

- Most **Canadian Muslims** are people who were raised Muslim. As with immigrants in general, Muslim immigrants have **come to Canada** for a variety of reasons.

# Reasons to come to Canada

- These include:
- higher education,
- security, employment,
- and family re-unification.

# Early History

- Early Muslim settlements were concentrated in Ontario and Alberta, with a shift into Québec in the 1930s.

- Most Muslims arriving in Canada since the 1960s settled in urban areas, with more than 70% now concentrated in the Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver metropolitan areas; the number approaches 80% if Edmonton and Calgary are included.

# Other reasons

- Others have come for **religious and political freedom**, and safety and security, leaving behind civil wars, persecution, and other forms of civil and ethnic strife.



# Examples (wars, diaspora)

- In the 1980s, Canada became an important place of refuge for those fleeing the **Lebanese Civil War**.

- The 1990s saw **Somali Muslims** arrive in the wake of the **Somali Civil War** as well as **Bosnian Muslims** fleeing the breakup of the former **Yugoslavia**.

- The **Muslim community in Canada** is almost as old as the nation itself. Four years after Canada's founding in 1867, the 1871 **Canadian Census** found 13 Muslims among the population. [\[13\]](#)

- A great number of Croatian Muslims (from Bosnia) came to American soil much like other Croatian Christians; some came prior to First World War. [\[14\]](#)

- The first Canadian mosque was constructed in Edmonton in 1938, when there were approximately 700 Muslims in the country. [\[15\]](#)

# World War 2

- . The years after **World War II** saw a small increase in the Muslim population. Part of it were **Croatian Muslims** from Bosnia, that were part of **Handschar Division** and other imprisoned Muslim Croats from Bosnia. [\[16\]](#)

- However Muslims were still a distinct minority. It was only after the removal of European immigration preferences in the *late 1960s* that Muslims began to arrive in significant numbers.



- Muslim Croats from Bosnia were the initiators and one of the main participants in founding of all first mosques in Toronto. First masjid, out of which the three oldest mosques in Toronto came were founded by Muslim Croats from Bosnia and by **Albanians** in 1968.



# Mosques

- **The oldest mosque** in **Toronto**, with the oldest **minaret** in **Ontario**, built in Osmanic style is the one in **Etobicoke**, that is part of the **Croatian Islamic Centre**,<sup>[18]</sup> whose readjustment into **masjid** (originally an old Catholic school building) was over on June 23, 1973.

- **Mosque** (an old Catholic school, bought for 75 000 CAD)<sup>[16]</sup> was readjusted for the Croats of the Islamic faith, with the support of the local Catholic **Croat community**.<sup>[19]</sup> One of the co-founders is the world eminent nuclear medicine expert, dr **Asaf Durakovic**.<sup>[20]</sup>

# Immigration Figures

- **In the 1970s** large-scale non-European immigration to Canada began. This was reflected in the growth of the Muslim community in Canada. **In 1981**, the Census listed 98,000 Muslims. <sup>[21]</sup> **The 1991** Census indicated 253,265 Muslims. <sup>[22]</sup> By 2001, the Islamic community in Canada had grown to more than 579,000. <sup>[8]</sup> **Estimates for the Census 2006 pointed to a figure of 800,000.** <sup>[2]</sup>

# Just one among many

- Compared to [Muslims in Europe](#), Canadian Muslims have not faced the same set of problems. [\[23\]](#)
- **The Muslim community** in Canada is **just one among many** ethnic, religious, racial and cultural communities that together make up Canada.
- **Canadian Muslims** may be classified as Muslims for official governmental statistical and policy-making purposes.

# Organisations

- The Muslim community in Canada is represented by several organizations:
  1. the **Canadian Islamic Congress**
  2. the **Ahlul Bayt Assembly of Canada**
  3. the **Muslim Association of Canada (MAC)** which has its foundation rooted in traditional Islamic ideology with a focus on dynamic application within the current Canadian socio-political context.

- the **Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN)**, a Muslim civil rights organization, which has become one of the leading advocacy voices for the Muslim community,
- the **Muslim Canadian Congress**, a secular group founded by **Tarek Fatah**,
- the **Canadian Muslim Union** another liberal group which split from the MCC,
- the **Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Canada**

- However, the major aspect of the Muslim community in Canada is the **widespread of cities** associations such as the Muslim Council of Montreal for example, Toronto's Council, that deals mainly with issues pertaining to the community in that city and they support the **national associations**.

- Most of these organisations are not grass root organizations, except MAC, but are umbrellas and coordination bodies between local associations.



- These are only some of the key organisations within the Muslim Canadian community.
- As the community is large and diverse with well over **60 ethno-cultural groups** various organisations are continually emerging as they seek to meet the needs of community members.

# Weber's Thesis

- In ideal terms, **to accept Islam** is to choose to live life according to the revealed will of God, to **surrender oneself** to His mercy and judgement, and to strive to maintain righteousness in the world.

- **Individual and communal** obedience to the tenets of the faith, coupled with Islam's message of equality among people, is thought to facilitate the elimination of social discord.

- The teachings of Islam are grounded in **the Book of Allah**, the *Qur'an* (Koran), the scripture Muslims believe to have been **revealed by God through the angel Gabriel**, in Arabic, to the Prophet Muhammad between 610 (when he was 40 years old) and 632 AD (the year of his death). These teachings guide Muslims in their practices and beliefs of Islam.

- Muslims are expected to live up to the demands of *Shari'a*, which refers to the **rights and responsibilities** expressed by an intricate legal-ethical system constructed and refined over the centuries.

- **The *Shari'a*** is derived primarily from the *Qur'an* and the example of the prophet Muhammad (known as the *Sunna*), and defines what *ishalal* (**permissible**), and *haram* (**prohibited**).

# The Two Denominations

- A large majority of Muslims, both in Canada and globally, adhere to **Sunni Islam**, while the remainder follow **Shi'i Islam**. The differences between these two denominations reflect early religious-political divisions in Islamic history.

- While both are **guided by the Qur'an** and the teachings of Muhammad, **Shi'i Muslims** believe that **Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law,** was designated as his immediate political and spiritual successor, and that this authoritative leadership (known as the *Imamate*) was restricted thereafter to the lineage of Ali.



- Both groups **affirm that the revelation through prophets has ceased**; however Shi'is accept *Imams* as divinely ordained leaders capable of providing a continuing source of Muslim doctrine since the death of the Prophet.

- **For Sunni Muslims**, Canada offered a special challenge since this group **lacked structured leadership**. Efforts to organize have historically occurred primarily at **the local level**; however, there have been important efforts at the national and continental levels.

- The Federation of Islamic Associations in the US and Canada was formed in the 1950s by second-generation Muslims of ARAB background









# Challenges

- Immigrants have often found it difficult to **incorporate Islamic practices into their lives** because of the pressures of an environment that is traditionally Christian and at variance with familiar customs.



- There are, for example, **no public reminders for the daily prayers**, and **special arrangements** often have to be negotiated with employers or schools to accommodate prayer times and religious holidays.

- Some modern Muslims question the **need to pay the *zakat*** since the Canadian government cares for the disadvantaged, and the Islamic **prohibition of usury raises** concerns regarding transactions involving interest payments, which are a routine component of Canadian economic life.

- **Islamic dietary restrictions** concerning the way meat is slaughtered and **against pork and alcohol** are often seen as impediments to social integration.

- **A strain** between Muslim communities and the larger Canadian society regarding **male-female relationships** has sometimes been evident since traditional Muslim cultures often expect particular **gender roles** that are not found in modern Western societies.

- Religious groups including Muslims argued that **the secular legal system** did not adequately include the laws and traditions of their faith.



- The global situation has fomented distrust between Muslim communities and government agencies. Related to this climate, **Statistics Canada** reported that in 2006, among the 220 hate crimes motivated by religion, 21% of offences were against Muslims (Islam).

# Summary

- Muslims follow a western religion-monotheism
- Faith has been tested in the New Canadian Environment.
- Weber's thesis Other worldly communal, not inner-worldly ascetic.